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FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8756
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE 0444
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE 4299
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE 2107
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE 6437
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE 0263
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE 1917
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1124
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEFNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NICOSIA 000292

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CY](#) [LE](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY NICOSIA HOLDS INITIAL EAC ON LEBANON CRISIS

REF: A. SMITH-SCHLICHER EMAIL OF MAY 9

[1](#)B. BEIRUT 640 AND OTHER

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Schlicher, Reasons 1.4 (c), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In response to recent developments in Lebanon and a message from the Department ExecSec (Ref A), Ambassador Schlicher chaired a meeting of Post's Emergency Action Committee (EAC) on May 9 at 1000 hrs local to discuss contingency plans for supporting Embassy Beirut as well as a possible assisted departure of Americans from Lebanon (clashes in southern Lebanon in 2006 led to the largest evacuation of Americans from foreign soil in history.) Ambassador outlined the current situation on the ground in Lebanon and noted that events could quickly escalate even further. He discussed priority Embassy actions, based on Ref A: discreetly identifying available sealift assets for transporting evacuees, available hotels, internal transport from ports/airports, and staging areas. Also discussed was the possible restart of a Beirut Airbridge (BAB). Ambassador tasked EAC staff to determine additional personnel needs that would be required to deal with a similar-sized (to 2006) crisis, focusing especially on Consular, Management, RSO/DHS, and Public Affairs (PAS). In the event of evacuations, consular will evaluate activation of the new NonCombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) Tracking System, while PAS will engage with Washington to determine an SOP to deal with possible inquiries from international media. Ambassador instructed all staff to review 2006 Lessons Learned information maintained in Post files, and to reach out now to counterparts at Embassy Beirut, neighboring posts, and Washington. Post will conduct another EAC at 1630 local, and stands prepared to call others throughout the weekend as circumstances merit. Post will compile and forward to Department a section-by-section table of resources that would be needed successfully to staff a full-blown NEO effort, along with thoughts on the Cyprus portion of the crisis. of key importance for contingency planning purposes is the determination of whether evacuees would reimburse the USG for travel out of Lebanon, as it will greatly affect the numbers departing. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador began the meeting by briefing colleagues about the situation in Lebanon; he was especially concerned by the lack of access to the Beirut International Airport and the difficulties incurred in leaving Lebanon

overland, meaning the great majority of evacuees might have to depart by sea, as in 2006. He next discussed funding a possible NEO, noting that Post's funds were clearly insufficient and that other accounts would need to cover costs incurred. The DCM outlined the dual mission of the Embassy should a NEO be declared: 1) our top priority is serving Embassy Beirut in whatever fashion possible, and 2) returning Americans safely and quickly to American soil. CONS will put the NEO Tracking System into immediate use, taking advantage of training recently conducted here; as it showed some quirks during training, a manual backup system will also be used. Both PAS and CONS noted that for public and consular affairs, TDYers were most needed at the beginning of a crisis, and so asked that potential TDYers be identified as soon as possible. PAS stated that in a crisis situation, coordination with Washington regarding the ground rules for dealing with international reporters was necessary; PAS will be in touch with Washington to coordinate.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador issued action taskings for each section and asked all section heads to assess staffing/ equipment/ resource needs to share with Department colleagues, to review "lessons learned" from the 2006 NEO, update contact information, check the Lebanon Crisis Portal for updates, and reach out to Embassy Beirut, neighboring embassies, and State colleagues in Washington. The Front Office committed to liaising with the British High Commission and Cypriot Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ECON, in coordination with DAO and MGMT, will assess possible commercial shipping options to transport Americans departing Lebanon for Cyprus. CONS will

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conduct further evaluation of the NEO System, and coordinate with counterparts in Beirut to discuss screening procedures for departing Americans and other evacuees, hoping to avoid pitfalls with inadmissible persons.

¶4. (C) DAO is in close touch with the European Command (EUCOM), to identify possible available U.S. Naval assets (the USS Mt Whitney is nearby); it is also dusting off plans and its SOP for the Airbridge. Noting that Beirut estimates that the airport could remain inaccessible for at least a week, the RSO will assemble a needs list and review procedures and preparations for security and screening of evacuees. RSO also recommends that DHS come to Post and forward-deploy to Beirut. MGMT and ECON will seek appropriate shelter facilities and medical services for incoming/departing evacuees, and MGT will provide technical support for Post's command center. POL will stand-up, staff, and run the center.

¶5. (U) The DCM ended the meeting by urging section heads, should a NEO be decided, to push down decision-making whenever possible, consult local staff for their institutional memory of the 2006 NEO and other crisis situations, and keep a close eye on staff morale and needs.

¶6. (U) Post will conduct a follow-on EAC at 1630 and report results septel.
SCHLICHER